



QAA

Outcomes from Collaborative provision audit Arrangements for monitoring and support



Sharing good practice

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Summary

It is clear from the 30 Collaborative provision audit reports published between May 2005 and March 2007 that awarding institutions were fully aware of the requirement for careful monitoring of collaborative provision in the intervals between formal approval and periodic review/revalidation events. All had in place systems for annual monitoring of the quality and standards of collaborative programmes. These systems were generally similar to those for monitoring of internal provision; however, in some cases they were tailored to accommodate different forms of collaborative provision or modes of delivery, or to reflect the particular risks involved in such provision. In most cases monitoring systems were found to be robust; where recommendations for improvement were made, these concerned the need to achieve consistency across provision and to involve staff of partner institutions in the monitoring process. Procedures for reporting and acting upon the outcomes of annual monitoring were sometimes found to be protracted and cumbersome, whereas the efforts of some awarding institutions to achieve effective oversight of their collaborative provision and to involve partner staff in that oversight were singled out as features of good practice.

The role of the primary contact within the awarding institution was found to be of crucial importance to the effective operation of collaborative arrangements, and numerous features of good practice were identified in this area. The variety of terms used for this primary contact reflects the different functions involved: liaising, managing, monitoring and supporting. 'Link tutor' is probably the most widely used term, and will be adopted in the remainder of this paper to denote the role. Link tutors played both a formal and an informal part in annual monitoring. Some had assessment responsibilities and were involved in the appointment of and support for external examiners. In some cases their monitoring responsibilities extended to scrutiny of the information produced by partner organisations about collaborative programmes. As the main point of contact with the awarding institution, the link tutor also monitored aspects of the student learning experience, such as the provision of adequate academic and personal support, the adequacy of learning resources, and the opportunities provided to students for feedback and representation.

The audit reports confirm that most awarding institutions fulfilled their obligation to ensure that staff directly involved in the delivery of collaborative programmes were properly qualified by scrutinising staffing arrangements and staff qualifications at initial approval and during periodic review. In the interim, the quality of teaching and any changes in staffing were monitored both formally as part of annual monitoring and informally by link tutors. Staff support and development needs were identified during appraisal or annual monitoring, and were met by awarding institutions in a variety of ways. The large number of features of good practice identified in the area of staff support and development indicates the care taken by awarding institutions to ensure that staff delivering collaborative programmes were appropriately trained and provided with the necessary development opportunities.

Preface

An objective of Institutional audit is 'to contribute, in conjunction with other mechanisms, to the promotion and enhancement of high quality in teaching and learning'. To provide institutions and other stakeholders with access to timely information on the findings of its Institutional audits, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) produces short thematic briefing papers, describing features of good practice and summarising recommendations from the audit reports. Since 2005 these have been published under the generic title *Outcomes from institutional audit* (hereafter, *Outcomes*). The first series of these papers drew on the findings of the Institutional audit reports published between 2003 and November 2004, and the second on those reports published between December 2004 and August 2006.

According to the definition in the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* (2004), **collaborative provision** denotes educational provision leading to an award, or to specific credit toward an award, of an awarding institution delivered and/or supported and/or assessed through an arrangement with a partner organisation. The present series relates to the separate Collaborative provision audits which were conducted in 30 institutions in England and Northern Ireland between May 2005 and March 2007. A list of the Collaborative provision audit reports on which the series is based is available in Appendix 1 (page 17). It should be noted that Collaborative provision audits were carried out only in those institutions where provision was deemed to be sufficiently extensive and/or complex to warrant an audit separate from the Institutional audit; in other institutions, collaborative activity (where present) was incorporated into the scope of the Institutional audit. The present series does not draw on the findings of those Institutional audits in relation to collaborative provision; for further information about collaborative provision as examined by Institutional audits, see the papers *Collaborative provision in the institutional audit reports* in series 1 and series 2 of the *Outcomes* papers.

A feature of good practice in Institutional audit is considered to be a process, a practice, or a way of handling matters which, **in the context of the particular institution**, is improving, or leading to the improvement of, the management of quality and/or academic standards, and learning and teaching. *Outcomes* papers are intended to provide readers with pointers to where features of good practice relating to particular topics can be located in the published audit reports. Each *Outcomes* paper, therefore, identifies the features of good practice in individual reports associated with the particular topic and their location in the Main report. Although all features of good practice are listed, in the interests of brevity not all are discussed in this paper. In the initial listing in paragraph 5, the first reference is to the numbered or bulleted lists of features of good practice at the end of each audit report, the second to the relevant paragraph(s) in Section 2 of the Main report. Throughout the body of this paper, references to features of good practice in the audit reports give the institution's name and the number from Section 2 of the Main report.

It should be emphasised that the features of good practice mentioned in this paper should be considered in their proper institutional context, and that each is perhaps best viewed as a stimulus to reflection and further development rather than as a

model for emulation. A note on the topics to be covered in the *Outcomes from Collaborative provision audit* series can be found at Appendix 2 (page 18). These topics do not match directly the topics of *Outcomes* series 1 and 2, given the different nature of the provision considered by Collaborative provision audit, though there is some overlap between the titles in the three series.

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Introduction and general overview

1 This paper is based on a review of the outcomes of the 30 Collaborative provision audit reports published between May 2005 and March 2007 (see Appendix 1, page 17).

2 The general conduct of collaborative activity is governed by the precepts of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice), Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*. More specifically, *Section 7: Programme approval, monitoring and review* provides a set of precepts relating to these processes which apply to both internal and collaborative provision. This paper covers the ongoing monitoring by awarding institutions of their collaborative links and programmes in the periods between formal approval and review events; another paper in this series deals with approval and review of partnerships and programmes. A section of the audit report covers awarding institutions' internal approval, monitoring and review processes; this paper therefore begins by examining the formal systems for annual monitoring of collaborative programmes, and the features of good practice and recommendations for improvements in this area identified by audit teams.

3 Members of staff of the awarding institutions appointed to act as the main point of contact with their partner institutions played a key part in both the formal and informal monitoring of collaborative provision. These staff members operate under a wide variety of job titles, reflecting the multifaceted nature of the role, but the most common term - link tutor - will be used throughout this paper. The role of the link tutor in the formal and informal monitoring and supporting of links and provision will be examined in this paper, in particular with reference to the numerous related features of good practice identified in the reports.

4 One of the precepts of *Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* of the *Code of practice* (hereafter referred to as *Section 2*) indicates that an awarding institution should be able to satisfy itself that staff are appropriately qualified, and that a partner organisation has in place effective measures to monitor and assure the proficiency of such staff. This paper will examine the ways in which awarding institutions monitored the quality of teaching staff and provided support and staff development.

Features of good practice

5 The Collaborative provision audit reports identify the following features of good practice relating to monitoring and support:

Annual monitoring procedures

- the thorough and robust process of annual monitoring which is consistently applied across all collaborative provision, regularly reviewed, and owned by staff [Manchester Metropolitan University, paragraph 136 (viii); paragraph 52]
- the use of partner institution staff in the role of rapporteur in annual monitoring which encourages the integration of partner institutions into the University's quality assurance processes [Staffordshire University, paragraph 201 (iii); paragraph 77]

- the innovative use of the website to enable active participation by the collaborative partners in the annual monitoring process for the PCGE/CertEd [University of Bolton, paragraph 206 (i); paragraphs 62 and 177]
- the involvement of partner institutions' staff in annual monitoring within the cognate subject group process [University of Westminster, paragraph 117 (ii); paragraph 40]
- the overview report on annual monitoring of collaborative provision produced by the Collaborative and Distributive Learning Sub-committee, which is characteristic of its effectiveness as a focus for rigorous analysis of collaborative activity [University of Derby, paragraph 146 (ii); paragraph 49]
- the thorough and effective analysis of annual course review documentation at University level [University of Ulster, paragraph 179 (iv); paragraph 70]
- the annual December meeting of programme leaders from the associate colleges as an effective mechanism for discussing annual programme reports and sharing good practice [University of Lancaster, paragraph 208 (ii); paragraphs 79 and 176]
- the Annual Executive meeting as a mechanism for enhancing communication between the University and partner institutions, and providing a strategic overview of the partnerships that ensures that all developments are in line with the University's intentions for collaborative provision [University of Huddersfield, paragraph 188 (iii); paragraph 63].

Link and liaison tutor arrangements

- the role of link tutors in supporting and developing partnership activity [University of Greenwich, paragraph 171 (i); paragraphs 33, 55, 72, 88, 107, 114, 121, 123 and 124]
- the role of the Designated Academic Liaison Officer in supporting the management of standards and the quality of collaborative provision, as exemplified by the development of staff at partner institutions [University of Huddersfield, paragraph 188 (i); paragraphs 39, 98 and 110]
- its continued development of the link tutor role and the resulting enhancement of the quality of the student experience [Liverpool John Moores University, paragraph 139 (ii); paragraph 23]
- the effectiveness, commitment and professionalism of the link tutors and the University's recognition of the importance of the link tutor role through the appointment of experienced staff to that position [The Manchester Metropolitan University, paragraph 136 (iii); paragraphs 34, 36, 55, 62, 67, 69, 99 and 102]
- the effectiveness of the verifier system in seeing that the University's quality assurance systems are met by its partners, while also incorporating a role to advise partners on how best to meet these requirements and enhance the quality of provision [Nottingham Trent University, paragraph 188 (i); paragraph 58]
- the role of the course consultant as a critical friend to the associate colleges, the resources invested in facilitating the role and the contribution of the annual meeting of course consultants to the sharing of good practice [University of Lancaster, paragraph 208 (i); paragraphs 37, 74 and 169]

- the care which the University takes in the induction of liaison tutors, in particular the shadowing of those currently in the role [University of Westminster, paragraph 117 (i); paragraph 28]
- the process used to ensure that in discharging their substantial duties for monitoring and supporting collaborative provision, the workloads of those who act as course coordinators (or their equivalents) across the University are monitored, and dynamically adjusted when appropriate [University of Bradford, paragraph 231 (fourth bullet point); paragraph 39]
- the pivotal role of the faculty heads of collaborative courses (FHCCs) in managing academic standards and quality and their proactive approach; in particular the effectiveness of the FHCC Forum in promoting continuous improvement and dissemination of good practice [University of Ulster, paragraph 179 (ii); paragraphs 47-51, 71, 81 and 110]
- the opportunity for enhancement provided by link tutor and partner forums [Manchester Metropolitan University, paragraph 136 (vi); paragraphs 41, 90 and 99]
- the use of formal liaison documents for the establishment of specific communication arrangements between each partner and their University liaison officer [Kingston University, paragraph 205 (i); paragraph 36].

Staff support and development arrangements

- the provision of a staff development process which integrates the experience of schools, partners and academic link persons, underpinned by central support services [University of East London, paragraph 168 (iii); paragraph 45]
- the support offered to collaborative partners through the University's staff development initiatives and effective academic liaison [London Metropolitan University, paragraph 133 (iii); paragraphs 41 and 90-92]
- the University's commitment to staff development at partner colleges, including the identification of staff needs and the opportunities provided for colleges to share experience [University of Hull, paragraph 157 (ii); paragraphs 38, 85 and 109]
- the steps the University has taken to ensure that members of staff of its partners in the region, who are delivering its collaborative provision, have the opportunity to become associate lecturers of the University, and to benefit from its facilities and learning support arrangements [University of Bradford, paragraph 231 (fifth bullet point); paragraph 140]
- the collegiate approach to staff development that provides extensive opportunities to all staff involved in the delivery and support of University programmes across partner institutions [University of Plymouth, paragraph 195 (iv); paragraphs 118 and 169]
- the staff development opportunities offered to staff at partner organisations and the scope of events organised by schools and centrally by the University [University of Sunderland, paragraph 143 (iii); paragraphs 89, 90 and 91]

- the staff development opportunities shared between the University and its partners [University of Wolverhampton, paragraph 178 (v); paragraphs 45 and 125-127]
- the comprehensiveness of the documentation and guidance available to staff in support of their work relating to collaborative provision and the extensive range of opportunities for staff development [University of Derby, paragraph 146 (v); paragraph 92]
- targeted staff development to strengthen quality management and promote good practice by partners [University of Ulster, paragraph 179 (v); paragraph 109]
- the variety of small scale funding initiatives available to staff in partner colleges [University of Central Lancashire, paragraph 186 (iv); paragraphs 134 and 135]
- the allocation of a proportion of the tuition fee income from overseas collaborative programmes to provide staff development for staff in the partner institutions [University of Lancaster, paragraph 208 (iv); paragraphs 74 and 180]
- the widespread commitment and support given to partners in the design, development and delivery of programmes [University of Middlesex, paragraph 171 (iv); paragraphs 48, 87, 114 and 124]
- the work of the University to facilitate effective relationships with staff in partner institutions through such mechanisms as the Associate College Network; Educational Partnerships; faculty away days; dedicated administrative support for 'non-standard' UK and international partnerships; and staff training in the use of the virtual learning environment for e-learning [De Montfort University, paragraph 104 (ii); paragraphs 30, 31, 47, 70, 73 and 75]
- the University's application of integrated institutional expertise in support of the continuing development of a higher education culture amongst partners [Liverpool John Moores University, paragraph 139 (iv); paragraph 85]
- the formation of the theology network as an example of an effective community of peers working collaboratively [University of Manchester, paragraph 161 (iv); paragraphs 102 and 138]
- the organisation of regular conferences for partners which promote communication, discussion of common interests and relationship-building [Nottingham Trent University, paragraph 188 (vi); paragraph 112]
- the support provided for staff in partner organisations through formal and informal communication channels and processes including the collaborative conference [Sheffield Hallam University, paragraph 145 (iii); paragraphs 93 and 141].

Themes

6 A consideration of the features of good practice and recommendations in the collaborative provision reports relating to arrangements for monitoring and support suggests that the following broad themes merit further discussion:

- annual monitoring procedures
- the link tutor role

- link tutors' contribution to monitoring quality and standards
- monitoring learning opportunities and the student experience
- monitoring staff support and development.

Annual monitoring procedures

7 It is apparent from the reports that awarding institutions were aware of the importance of regular monitoring of collaborative programmes in the intervals between formal validation or approval and periodic review or re-validation events. All the institutions had in place a process of annual monitoring, described variously as the 'cornerstone' of the system of regular review of quality and standards in collaborative provision, a necessary check on the 'health' of collaborative programmes, and a way of identifying development and enhancement needs. Only one report, however, identifies 'the thorough and robust process of annual monitoring which is consistently applied across all collaborative provision, regularly reviewed, and owned by staff' as a feature of good practice [Manchester Metropolitan University, paragraphs 52 and 136 (viii)] and a number of reports contain recommendations for strengthening and increasing the effectiveness of the process.

8 It appears from the audit reports that in most cases the monitoring process began at programme level. In the interests of consistency several awarding institutions used the same programme monitoring process for internal and collaborative provision, although in some cases standard templates were tailored to accommodate different forms of collaborative provision and modes of delivery, or to reflect the additional risks involved. Annual monitoring reports were based on the review and analysis of a range of data, including student feedback; student progression and achievement; graduate destinations; reports of external examiners and responses to them; minutes of programme team meetings; staffing and staff development. There are recommendations in several reports concerning the need to improve the quality of the statistical data provided for annual monitoring; this reflects the conclusions of the paper *Progression and completion information* in this series.

9 The need to achieve consistency across the whole range of an institution's collaborative provision presented another challenge for programme-level monitoring. There are several recommendations in the audit reports concerning the inconsistent implementation of monitoring procedures. Encouraging ownership of the monitoring process by partner staff and fostering attitudes of self-reflection could also present a challenge for the awarding institutions. In many cases link tutors, whose annual reports contributed to the monitoring process, played a key role by advising and supporting programme teams responsible for producing the reports. However, at least one institution was recommended '[to increase] support for staff responsible for the annual monitoring of collaborative courses, to ensure that suitable levels of reflection and self-evaluation are consistently demonstrated'. On the other hand, there are some features of good practice in this area. One institution was commended for the use of partner institution staff as rapporteurs in annual monitoring, as this encouraged the integration of partner institutions into quality assurance processes [Staffordshire University, paragraphs 77 and 201 (iii)]; the innovative use of a website to enable active participation by collaborative partners in the annual monitoring process is identified as a feature of good practice in another report [University of

Bolton, paragraphs 62 and 206 (i)], while a third institution was commended for its involvement of partner staff in annual monitoring within cognate subject groups [University of Westminster, paragraphs 40 and 117 (iii)].

10 The annual monitoring process in collaborative provision was found to involve a chain or hierarchy of reports. Programme reports generally went to the host faculty or school, sometimes accompanied by an overview report drawn up by the partner institution. After reports had been considered by the host faculty or school, an overview report was compiled and sent to the relevant institutional committees. In one awarding institution the 'rigorous analysis' of collaborative activity in an overview report on annual monitoring prepared for one of its committees was identified as a feature of good practice [University of Derby, paragraphs 49 and 146 (ii)]; in another 'the thorough and effective analysis of annual programme monitoring documentation' was similarly identified [University of Ulster, paragraphs 70 and 179 (iv)]. In other cases, a protracted and complex reporting system could impair the effectiveness of the monitoring process, and recommendations were made in several reports for the review or simplification of the process or the implementation of shorter timescales for the completion of annual monitoring. In addition, a chain of summaries and overview reports could lead to the loss of detail and to an undue degree of aggregation, making it difficult for the awarding institution to gain sufficient oversight of the quality of its collaborative provision or to compare it with internal provision. In one report the consideration of annual monitoring reports by a meeting of programme leaders for partner institutions was seen by the audit team as an effective way of monitoring standards and quality; the meeting also provided an excellent opportunity for the dissemination of good practice, and was identified as a feature of good practice [University of Lancaster, paragraphs 74 and 208 (ii)]. Another institution had introduced annual evaluative meetings between institution and partner staff, at which issues in annual monitoring were followed up; the audit team considered this to be an effective mechanism for fostering communication and reviewing and developing partnerships, which constituted good practice [University of Huddersfield, paragraphs 63 and 188 (iii)].

The link tutor role

11 The audit reports make it clear that the link tutor role is of crucial importance in the effective operation of collaborative arrangements, its significance perhaps being indicated by the number of features of good practice identified in this area. In one report, in which the role of link tutors in supporting and developing partnership activity is identified as a feature of good practice, the role is described as 'challenging in that it involves both development and monitoring, supporting and checking' [University of Greenwich, paragraphs 141, 171 (i)]. The various characteristics of the role are reflected in the names given to those who formed the key point of contact between the awarding institutions and their collaborative partners. 'Link tutor', indicating the academic nature of the role, is the most common designation, with variants such as 'university link tutor', 'link persons' or 'academic link persons'. Other titles such as 'liaison tutor' or 'liaison officer' emphasise the significance of the post as an intermediary. The role of the Designated Academic Liaison Officer in supporting the management of standards and the quality of collaborative provision is identified as a feature of good practice in one report [University of Huddersfield, paragraph 188 (i)].

12 The managerial aspect of the role is reflected in titles such as 'liaison manager', 'collaborative coordinator', 'course coordinator', or simply 'coordinator'. In one report the pivotal role of the faculty heads of collaborative courses in managing academic standards and quality, and their proactive approach to their role, is identified as a feature of good practice [University of Ulster, paragraph 179 (ii)]. One institution used the title 'verifier', which draws attention to a regulatory function. The verifier system was identified as effective in ensuring that partners met the institution's requirements for quality assurance and management of standards. At the same time, verifiers advised partners on how these requirements might be met, and encouraged quality enhancement. This was identified as a feature of good practice [Nottingham Trent University, paragraph 188 (i)]. Titles such as 'course consultant', 'subject representative' or 'academic adviser' indicate that the role is perceived as that of a critical friend to the partner institution.

13 The wide-ranging nature of the link tutor role is recognised by features of good practice and recommendations for action found in several of the audit reports. One institution was recommended to develop a coherent framework for all aspects of the role of link tutor, including appointment, tenure and induction, support and development, and appraisal; while another was recommended to formalise a core definition for the role in view of the essential part played by the link tutors in the maintenance and smooth running of its collaborative provision. Other identified features of good practice in this area involved one institution's appointment of experienced staff to the position, in recognition of the importance of the role [The Manchester Metropolitan University, paragraphs 34, 136 (iii)]; the way in which a second institution monitored and adjusted when appropriate the workloads of course coordinators [University of Bradford, paragraphs 39 and 231 (fourth bullet point)]; and the care taken by a third in the induction of liaison tutors [University of Westminster, paragraphs 28 and 117 (i)]. Recommendations were made, however, to other institutions to consider providing support, training and development for staff taking on the key role of link tutor.

14 Variability and inconsistency in the way in which link tutors operated was noted in some of the audit reports. In one institution the use of formal liaison documents establishing communication arrangements between partner institutions and the link tutors was identified as a feature of good practice; however, in view of the extensive time commitment involved in the post, the institution was recommended to create forums through which link tutors could share good practice [Kingston University, paragraphs 36, 129 and 205 (i)]. The effectiveness of link tutor forums in providing an opportunity to share concerns, disseminate good practice and enhance collaborative provision is noted in several reports, three of which specifically identify this as a feature of good practice [University of Lancaster, paragraphs 37 and 208 (i); The Manchester Metropolitan University, paragraphs 39 and 136 (iii); University of Ulster, paragraphs 51 and 179 (ii)].

Link tutors' contribution to monitoring quality and standards

15 The audit reports indicate that link tutors not only were responsible for familiarising partner institutions with the awarding institution's quality assurance procedures, but also had formal and informal responsibilities in actually monitoring

quality and standards. In several cases reports note that link tutors made a considerable contribution to the annual monitoring process. They provided advice and guidance to partner institutions on the requirements for annual monitoring, and in some cases were responsible for collating documentation, confirming student data or even drafting the reports. In several cases separate reports from the link tutors formed part of the annual monitoring process and, in at least one awarding institution, their report was expected to include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the monitoring process. Link tutors were sometimes responsible for providing feedback on annual monitoring reports to the partner institution, or for following up action plans through their membership of programme committees.

16 Although link tutors were rarely found to be directly involved in assessment, (apart from offering informal advice to teaching staff on marking), their responsibilities often included attending examination boards and other assessment events. In several cases they also had a role to play in the appointment of external examiners. In one institution the link tutor worked with the partner institution to ensure that the awarding institution's procedures for identifying and appointing external examiners were understood and followed; in another the link tutor liaised with the partner on the nomination and appointment of external examiners; in a third the arrangements for appointing a local overseas collaborative provision examiner were monitored by the link tutor; and in a final case the link tutor provided training for external examiners. The liaison responsibilities of link tutors frequently involved providing informal feedback on external examiners' reports, ensuring that problems identified by external examiners were dealt with, and monitoring the partner institution's responses to comments made by external examiners.

17 The monitoring duties of link tutors often extended to scrutiny of the information provided by partner institutions about validated programmes, in line with Precept 28 of *Section 2* of the *Code of practice*. It was noted in one report that link tutors were required to look at all published material relating to the collaborative programmes and include comments in their annual reports. In a second case link tutors assisted in the monitoring of information given to students, and were asked to confirm in their mid-year reports that marketing and publicity materials complied with the awarding institution's requirements. In another institution link tutors had the 'crucial role' of ensuring the accuracy of any promotional materials bearing the name of the awarding institution, and reporting on this activity as part of annual monitoring. There are several instances in the audit reports of link tutors monitoring student handbooks for accuracy. Only one recommendation for action in the area of information is directly related to the monitoring role of link tutors: an institution was recommended to formalise the arrangement by which partner-produced promotional material was regularly checked by link tutors in the interval between the approval of a programme and its review.

Monitoring learning opportunities and the student experience

18 It appears from the audit reports that in some institutions the link tutor's duties included the monitoring of admissions by partner institutions. In one case the link tutors had a specific responsibility to provide advice and support on the selection, admission and induction of students, although the audit team found variable practice

in the monitoring of admissions. In another institution the link tutors were required to ensure that agreed admissions requirements were implemented consistently and fairly across all partners. Link tutors in a third institution were responsible for ensuring that partners handled admissions in accordance with the awarding institution's requirements - this included checking that English language competence thresholds and any relevant professional regulatory or statutory body requirements were met.

19 Arrangements for the academic and personal support of students were usually examined as part of approval and review procedures, with an overview maintained by means of annual monitoring reports. It appears from the audit reports, however, that link tutors could provide additional monitoring through their annual reports or by direct contact with staff and students in the partner institutions. They could also provide an additional point of contact and source of support to students when issues could not be resolved locally. The valuable contribution made by link tutors to the academic and pastoral support of students in partner institutions contributed in one report to a feature of good practice [University of Greenwich, paragraphs 120, 124 and 171 (i)].

20 The significant role of link tutors in the ongoing monitoring of learning resources was noted in several of the audit reports. Annual monitoring reports were usually the main mechanism for ensuring the adequacy of learning resources, though they were complemented by the annual reports of link tutors, who had the opportunity to check on resources (often in meetings with students) during their visits to partner institutions. In one report, in which the role of the link tutors in supporting and developing partnership activity was identified as a feature of good practice, it was noted that the link tutors were expected to maintain a watching brief over resource provision and were asked to comment on any resource issues in their reports [University of Greenwich, paragraphs 114 and 171 (i)]. In another institution, in which the link tutors had been given the responsibility for checking learning resources, they undertook audits during visits to ensure that provision was being maintained and improved; their reports acted as both a record and a planning device.

21 It appears from the audit reports that link tutors often had a key role to play in the management of student feedback and in monitoring the effectiveness of student representation. During their visits to partner institutions they were expected to meet students and collect feedback from them; this feedback was either acted on directly or formally relayed to the awarding institution in the annual reports of the link tutors. Several reports note that students saw link tutors as offering an additional means of ensuring that their views were represented to the awarding institution; students who met one audit team 'warmly acknowledged the way in which the link tutor role complemented [formal] student representation'. In some cases link tutors were required to attend meetings of programme committees or student panels and to take forward any issues arising there; in one case link tutors met students without partner staff being present. One audit team was presented with examples which demonstrated how link tutors could effectively represent student requests to staff of the awarding institution. Another audit team concluded that link tutors were 'a key conduit' between collaborative provision students and the awarding institution, and this contributed to the identification of a feature of good practice in this area [University of Huddersfield, paragraphs 98 and 188 (i)].

Monitoring staff support and development

22 The audit reports confirm that most awarding institutions fulfilled their obligation to ensure that the staff delivering collaborative programmes were properly qualified, in line with precept A17 of *Section 2* of the *Code of practice*. This was generally achieved by scrutinising staffing arrangements and staff qualifications at the initial approval of partners and programmes and as part of the periodic review process. One institution was found to require the provision of information about the recruitment and monitoring of partner institution staff, staff development, appraisal and teaching observation as part of the institutional approval process; programme approval provided a further opportunity to scrutinise the qualifications of the teaching staff. Another institution required, as part of the process of validation of a new programme, an evaluation of the human resources required for the programme; a mapping of staff expertise in the partner organisation to modules; information about arrangements for the recruitment, induction, management and support of partner staff involved in programme delivery; and details of how staff development needs would be identified and met.

23 The appointment of staff teaching on collaborative programmes was usually devolved to the partner institution, with changes in staffing between approval and review being monitored formally as part of annual programme review. The link tutor was found to have a key role to play in the monitoring of staffing arrangements. Such monitoring could take a variety of forms, including:

- receiving and checking the CVs of new staff and submitting them to the awarding institution for approval
- regular reporting of staff changes as a contribution to annual monitoring
- considering the qualifications of part-time and sessional staff
- offering advice to the partner institution on staffing matters
- monitoring and reporting on the quality of learning and teaching.

24 The appraisal of teaching staff was usually the responsibility of the partner institution, although in some cases awarding institutions required partners to have in place schemes for the appraisal and peer observation of staff teaching on validated programmes. It was noted in one report that the awarding institution recognised that peer observation should be implemented across the whole of its collaborative provision; however, it sought to maintain a balance between, on the one hand, the need to safeguard standards and quality, and on the other, a recognition of the autonomy of the partner to run its own employee system. While one audit team noted the strengthening of the awarding institution's monitoring of the peer observation process, it was the view of another that sharing information on the outcomes of peer observation of teaching might enhance the monitoring of the quality of teaching staff. Several awarding institutions gave staff teaching on collaborative programmes the status of honorary lecturers so that they benefited not only from access to facilities, but also from learning support arrangements such as peer observation of teaching.

25 Numerous features of good practice in the audit reports related to awarding institutions' monitoring of the support required by partner institution staff involved in the delivery of collaborative programmes, and to the staff development provided

as a consequence. Partner organisation arrangements for staff development were examined in a number of awarding institutions as part of programme approval and review. In some cases these included the provision of development opportunities for administrative and support staff. Staff development needs were identified either through appraisal or as part of annual monitoring processes. It was noted in more than one report, however, that the individual characteristics of the awarding institution's partners did not lend themselves to a single approach to the monitoring of their staff development arrangements. In these cases, as in others, the link tutor was found to have a significant monitoring role.

26 Identified staff support and development needs were met by awarding institutions in a variety of ways. It was noted in one audit report that, in order to promote capacity building in partner organisations, the awarding institution sought to maintain a balance between assurance of standards and quality, and provision of development opportunities for partner staff. The audit team considered that a suitable balance had been achieved, and identified the support provided through formal and informal processes as a feature of good practice [Sheffield Hallam University, paragraphs 92 and 145 (iii)]. The provision of a staff development process which integrated the experience of partners, link tutors and schools, underpinned by central support services, was commended in one report [University of East London, paragraph 168 (iii)]; while the staff development opportunities offered to staff at partner organisations, and the scope of events organised locally and centrally by the awarding institution, were identified as a feature of good practice in another report [University of Sunderland, paragraphs 90 and 143 (ii)]. Some awarding institutions were noted as being proactive in providing development opportunities to staff in collaborative partners. One awarding institution responded actively to issues that arose through monitoring by providing specific staff development; the support that it offered to collaborative partners through its staff development initiatives and effective academic liaison was identified as a feature of good practice [London Metropolitan University, paragraphs 91 and 133 (iii)]. Another awarding institution was noted to have a clear and effective strategic approach to staff development for collaborative provision staff, and was commended for its targeted staff development to strengthen quality management and promote good practice by partners [University of Ulster, paragraphs 109, 112 and 179 (ii)]. Financial support was available in some cases: in one report the allocation of a proportion of the tuition fee income from overseas collaborative programmes to provide staff development for staff in the partner institutions was identified as a feature of good practice [University of Lancaster, paragraphs 135 and 208 (iv)]. The variety of small scale funding initiatives available to staff in partner colleges was commended in a second report [University of Central Lancashire, paragraphs 134 and 186 (iv)]; while in a third, a collegiate approach to staff development, providing extensive opportunities to all staff involved in the delivery and support of collaborative programmes, was identified as a feature of good practice. This report noted that funding was available to develop scholarly activity and staff research profiles in partner institutions [University of Plymouth, paragraphs 116 and 195 (iv)].

27 Link tutors not only monitored and reported on the effectiveness of staff development in partner institutions; the audit reports also show that they offered advice and support to staff on quality assurance matters. In one report in which the

widespread commitment and support given to partners in the design, development and delivery of programmes was identified as a feature of good practice, the responsibilities of the link tutors included the provision of advice and guidance on all aspects of quality assurance and enhancement. It was noted that they generally saw staff development at partner institutions as also forming part of their role [University of Middlesex, paragraphs 114 and 171 (iv)]. Audit reports note that link tutors are delivering staff development workshops during their visits to partners on matters such as quality assurance procedures; assessment and moderation; the Academic Infrastructure; and the development of teaching skills. Although one audit team noted the provision by link tutors of staff development on topics such as assessment, plagiarism and writing annual monitoring reports, it could find little evidence of subject-based staff development activity. In another report, however, the establishment of an effective research group and a community of peers working together across an institution's collaborative provision was identified as a feature of good practice in that it incorporated aspects both of development and of peer support [University of Manchester, paragraphs 102 and 161 (iv)].

28 It is clear from the audit reports that awarding institutions' provision of development opportunities to staff in partner organisations and institutions had the effect of enhancing the quality of the experience of students in collaborative provision. Examples of good practice include the wide variety of staff development opportunities made available to partner staff [De Montfort University, paragraphs 73, 75 and 104 (ii); University of Sunderland, paragraphs 89, 90 and 143 (iii)]; the sharing of staff development initiatives with partners [University of Wolverhampton, paragraphs 125, 127 and 178 (v)]; the comprehensiveness of the documentation and guidance available to support collaborative provision [University of Derby, paragraphs 92 and 146 (v)]; and the application of 'integrated institutional expertise' in support of the development of a higher education culture amongst partners [Liverpool John Moores University, paragraphs 85 and 139 (iv)]. A particular feature of enhancement was the organisation by several awarding institutions of conferences for staff in their partner institutions, which were both a form of staff development and an effective way of disseminating good practice across collaborative provision [Nottingham Trent University, paragraphs 112 and 188 (vi); Sheffield Hallam University, paragraphs 93 and 145 (iii)].

Conclusions

29 Taken together, the 30 Collaborative provision audit reports published between May 2005 and March 2007 suggest that awarding institutions had in place appropriate systems for monitoring the standards and quality of programmes delivered by partner institutions, in accordance with the precepts of both *Section 2* and *Section 7* of the *Code of practice*. In several of the reports aspects of these systems were identified as features of good practice. There were, however, a number of recommendations intended to improve the consistency and effectiveness of the monitoring systems and the way in which their outcomes were analysed and reported.

30 Whatever the name used to describe the role, the link tutor was essential to the smooth operation of collaborative arrangements. Link tutors played an essential part

in many aspects of the formal and informal monitoring of collaborative programmes, and were responsible for providing guidance and support to both students and staff. The number of features of good practice associated with their work is an indication both of the significance of the role and of the effectiveness with which it is carried out.

31 The reports confirm that awarding institutions were meeting their obligation to ensure that the staff delivering collaborative programmes were appropriately qualified and supported. The sizeable number of features of good practice related to staff development opportunities demonstrates the care taken to ensure that teaching staff had access to appropriate training and development.

Appendix 1 - the Collaborative provision audit reports

2004-05

Middlesex University

Open University

2005-06

De Montfort University

Kingston University

Liverpool John Moores University

London Metropolitan University

Nottingham Trent University

Oxford Brooks University

Sheffield Hallam University

The Manchester Metropolitan University

University of Bradford

University of Central Lancashire

University of East London

University of Greenwich

University of Hertfordshire

University of Hull

University of Lancaster

University of Leeds

University of Northumbria at Newcastle

University of Plymouth

University of Sunderland

University of Westminster

University of Wolverhampton

2006-07

Bournemouth University

Staffordshire University

The University of Manchester

University of Bolton

University of Derby

University of Huddersfield

University of Ulster

The full reports can be found at www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews.

Appendix 2 - titles in *Outcomes from Collaborative provision audit*

Approval and review of partnerships and programmes
Frameworks, guidance and formal agreements
Student representation and mechanisms for feedback
Student support and information
Assessment and classification
Progression and completion information
Use of the Academic Infrastructure
External examining arrangements
Learning support arrangements in partnership links
Arrangements for monitoring and support

Papers are available from www.qaa.ac.uk/outcomes

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